LESSON PLAN

Wacky Media Songs: Finding and Verifying

This lesson is part of USE, UNDERSTAND & ENGAGE: A digital media literacy framework for Canadian schools. http://mediasmarts.ca/teacher-resources/digital-literacy-framework

LEVEL: Grade K to 3

DURATION: 10-15 minutes per activity

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Overview

This lesson series contains discussion topics and extension activities for teachers to integrate the TVOKids Original series *Wacky Media Songs*. This lesson focuses on the skills to effectively search the internet for information they need for personal and school purposes, and then evaluate, authenticate and critique the sources and information they use for school or for personal reasons.

Learning outcomes

Students will:

- Understand that media have social and political implications
- Distinguish between fact and opinion and reliable and unreliable sources
- Understand that media have commercial considerations that may influence the content of news and information sources
- Understand that digital media are networked
- Reflect on how the ease of publishing digital content makes it easier to spread mis- and disinformation
- Develop strategies for identifying reliable sources and verifying information
- Understand that how digital tools are made influences how we use them
- Consider the impacts of algorithmic recommendation systems on our media experiences

Preparation and materials

- Review the following *Wacky Media Songs* videos and prepare to show students the ones you wish to discuss:
  - Fake News!
  - Like Don't Like!

- [Feed the Machine!](#)
- [Fact Versus Opinion Showdown!](#)
- [The Answers are Here!](#)
- [The Algorithm Knows!](#)
- [I Want Your Clicks!](#)
- [Won't Be Fooled Again!](#)

Procedure

Each of the videos in this lesson has discussion prompts for before and after viewing the lesson. Some also have extension activities to follow the lesson.

After reviewing the videos, choose which ones you feel will be most interesting and relevant to your students.

FAKE NEWS!

Fake news can look like it's real, but sometimes it's just someone trying to trick you. How can you tell the difference? Ava's got hot tips on how to spot fake news!

Before the video, ask: What's the difference between news and other media?

After the video, ask: What are some of the things Ava suggests doing to find out if a news story is reliable? (Find out where it came from and if they're a reliable source of news.)

What are some places reliable news comes from? (Print newspapers, TV news broadcasts, websites of reputable news organizations.)

Extension Activity: Visit [CBC Kids News](#) and watch some of the news stories. How could you find out if CBC Kids News is a reliable news source? (You could ask a parent, guardian or teacher if they already know it's reliable. You could also look it up on Google or Wikipedia to see if people generally say that CBC is a reliable source.)

If you weren't sure, how could you find out if a story you saw there was true or not? (You could look up the story on Google and then click the News tab, which only shows you results from real news sources. You can also use MediaSmarts' custom news search engine, [bit.ly/news-search](#), which searches dozens of reliable news sources all at once.)

Remember that we're more likely to trust things we want to believe, and we'll try harder to debunk things we don't want to think are true. Encourage students to ask three questions before they investigate anything:

• What do I already know or believe about this?

• Why do I want to believe or disprove it?

• What would make me change my mind?

For more tips on finding out if a source is reliable, see this short MediaSmarts video.

LIKE DON'T LIKE!

When we like something, kind of automatically without giving something else a chance, it's called bias. We all have biases and so does the media. Ava's song explores the ways that bias affects us all.

Before the video, ask: Do you know the word "bias"? What do you think it means to be biased?

After the video, ask: Everyone has biases for and against things (like cats and dogs in the video). What are some of your biases? How does it help us to know our own biases?

Extension Activity: Take a look together at some of students' favourite cartoons that feature animals. Are there some that are usually bad guys? Are there some that are usually good guys? Are there some kinds of animals that never appear at all? (That's a kind of bias too!)
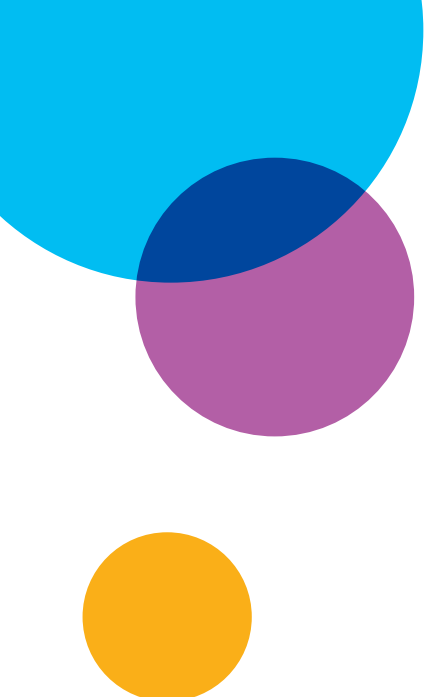
FEED THE MACHINE!

Internet search engines are super useful for looking up all kinds of stuff. But to get the best results, we have to feed the machine the right way. Ava's catchy song has tons of great tips on how to do that.

Before the video, ask: Can you think of any examples of search engines? (Google is the most well-known. In fact they may know what Google is but not that it's a search engine!) How do you think search engines work?

After the video, ask: What are some things you might like to look up with a search engine?

Why should you be careful to find just what you're looking for? (Search engines search the whole internet, so you might find a lot of things that aren't what you're interested in, including stuff you don't want to see.)

How could you use some of the tips in the video (like the minus sign or putting phrases in quotes) to help you find just what you're looking for?

How can you find out if somebody paid to have their search result come up first? (It'll have the word "Ad" - but you have to remember to look for it!)

Extension Activity: Pick a topic or a question that students are interested in. Use the tipsheet [How to Search the Internet Effectively](#) to find some good sources. Once you have some sources that you know are reliable, you can even [make your own custom search engine!](#)

You can also use this custom search engine to search twenty reliable, kid-friendly sites: [bit.ly/kids-search](#)

FACT VERSUS OPINION SHOWDOWN!

Get ready to play the Fact or Opinion game with Ava! There's a big difference between a fact and an opinion. Knowing how to tell them apart is super important. And that's a fact!

Before the video, ask: What do you think a "fact" is? How is it different from an opinion?

After the video, ask: Can something be a fact and still be wrong? (A fact is something that can be proven – but not all facts are proven to be true. "The moon is made of cheese" is a fact statement, but it's not a true fact.) How do we know which opinions are more convincing? (You can never totally prove an opinion is true, but you can use facts to show that one opinion is more convincing than another.)

THE ANSWERS ARE HERE

While doing research for her homework, Ava is overwhelmed by all the information she finds online. Who's an expert, what's the most reliable source, what information can she trust? There's somewhere she can go to get everything she needs – the library!

Before the video, ask: What would you do if you had to find out something for a school project? Would it be different if you were looking for something you were interested in yourself, like getting a pet?

After the video, ask: What are some good things about getting information from the public library instead of the internet? When might the internet be a better choice?

THE ALGORITHM KNOWS!

How does the Internet know that Ava loves puppies and why does it show her all kinds of stuff about puppies? Because the algorithm knows! An algorithm is like an online formula that collects information about us based on what we search for and what videos we watch. Mystery solved!

Before the video, ask: Do you know the word "algorithm"? What do you think it means?

After the video, ask: What are some apps or websites that you use that use algorithms? (YouTube uses an algorithm to recommend what to watch next; Google uses one to decide what search results and ads to show you.)

Why do they use algorithms to decide what to show you? (It lets them target you with ads and other content you're more likely to respond to.)

What might be bad about only seeing the things the algorithm recommends to you?

I WANT YOUR CLICKS!

"Unbelievable!" "Shocking!" "Exclusive!" Over-the-top headlines like that are called clickbait and they're meant to make us super curious so we'll click on links. Someone gets paid for every click and just one click can lead you all over the place. So stop and think before you just click!

Before the video, ask: Have you ever seen a headline on a website or a video title that made it look more interesting than it really was? How did it do that?

After the video, ask: What are some of the ways that clickbait gets you to click on a link?

Why do they do that? (They get paid when you see the ads on the page.)

How can you make sure not to click on a bad link? (Think before you click on anything. On a computer, you can also hover the pointer over a link and the web address will appear. That tells you if you're leaving the website.)

Extension Activity: Look at a newspaper or a magazine, or the website of a reliable news source. Can you find any headlines that use the clickbait tricks from the video? How are they different from a clickbait site? (All news outlets use headlines to make you interested in reading or watching a story. The difference is that headlines on "clickbait" sources are actually misleading, and that they don't do their own reporting – they just retell news stories from other sources.)

WON'T BE FOOLED AGAIN!

Oops! Ava falls for an April Fool's joke her friend played on her. She realizes she should check where information comes from before believing it. Ava plays detective as she sings about checking your sources so you don't get fooled like she did.

Before the video, ask: Think about the last time you learned something online. How did you know if it was true? What steps did you take to find out?

After the video, ask: What are some of the ways we can find out if a source of information is reliable? (We can look them up on a search engine or ask a parent, guardian or teacher.)